

21 September 1966

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

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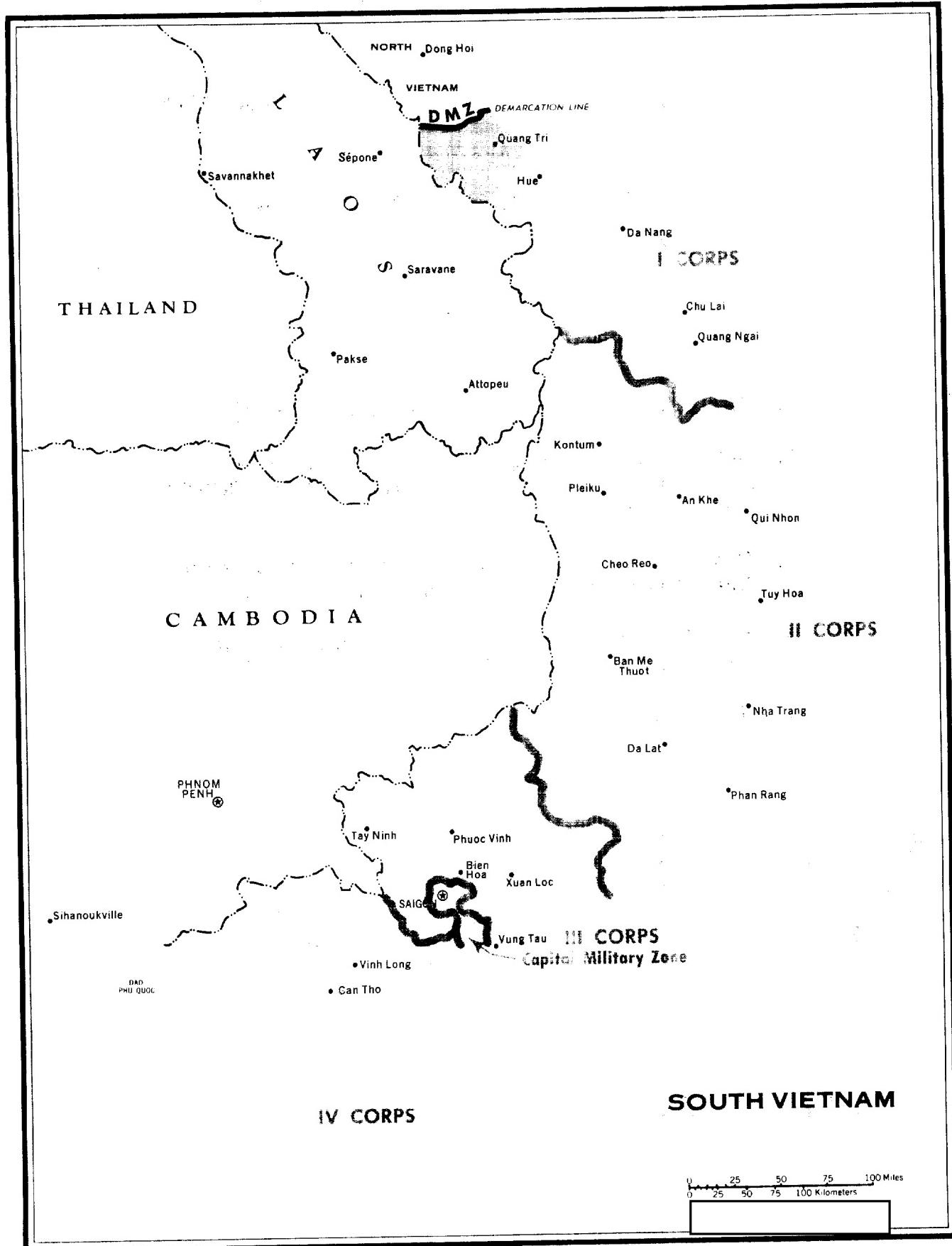
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*Vietnam: (Information as of 4:30 AM EDT)

Cambodia-Viet Cong Border Talks: Negotiations between Cambodian Prince Sihanouk and the Viet Cong have halted.

Sihanouk told the press in Phnom Penh yesterday that the border talks have broken down as a result of certain unspecified "complications." He indicated, however, that a "simple and shorter" border agreement between himself and Liberation Front chairman Nguyen Huu Tho was still a possibility.

Although Sihanouk announced earlier this month that a border agreement with the Vietnamese Communists would be signed before the end of the year, the month-old talks have been plagued by a score of procedural and substantive problems. The fundamental difficulty, however, has been Sihanouk's fear of the possible consequences of concluding such an agreement, and his desire to extract as much as possible in the way of "guarantees" and border concessions to make the risk worthwhile.

[redacted]
[redacted]
North Vietnamese insisted that the border agreement include a rider specifying that the demarcation of the frontier would be subject to further negotiation--a requirement which Sihanouk would almost certainly find unpalatable.

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Military Developments in South Vietnam: Sharp fighting has flared in northern Quang Tri Province where US Marines are continuing to ferret out heavily entrenched North Vietnamese troops just south of the Demilitarized Zone. Preliminary casualty counts for the fighting of 19 and 20 September stand at 63 enemy killed and 10 US killed and 24 wounded. (Map)

Political Developments in South Vietnam: Civilian politicians are beginning to maneuver to curb the military Directorate's influence in the newly elected constituent assembly.

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*Panama: Student demonstrations in Panama City on 19 September were probably only the first in a new series of extremist-led disturbances.

National Guard units used tear gas to disperse 1,000 secondary students demanding the release from jail of several student leaders and protesting alleged government repression and poor educational facilities.

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The next regular session of the National Assembly is scheduled to open on 1 October. Continued street demonstrations before and during the assembly session would weaken Robles' position in the legislature, since the deputies are extremely susceptible to public pressures. A loss of legislative support would call in question Robles' plan to convene a special session of the assembly early next year to deal with the canal treaties.

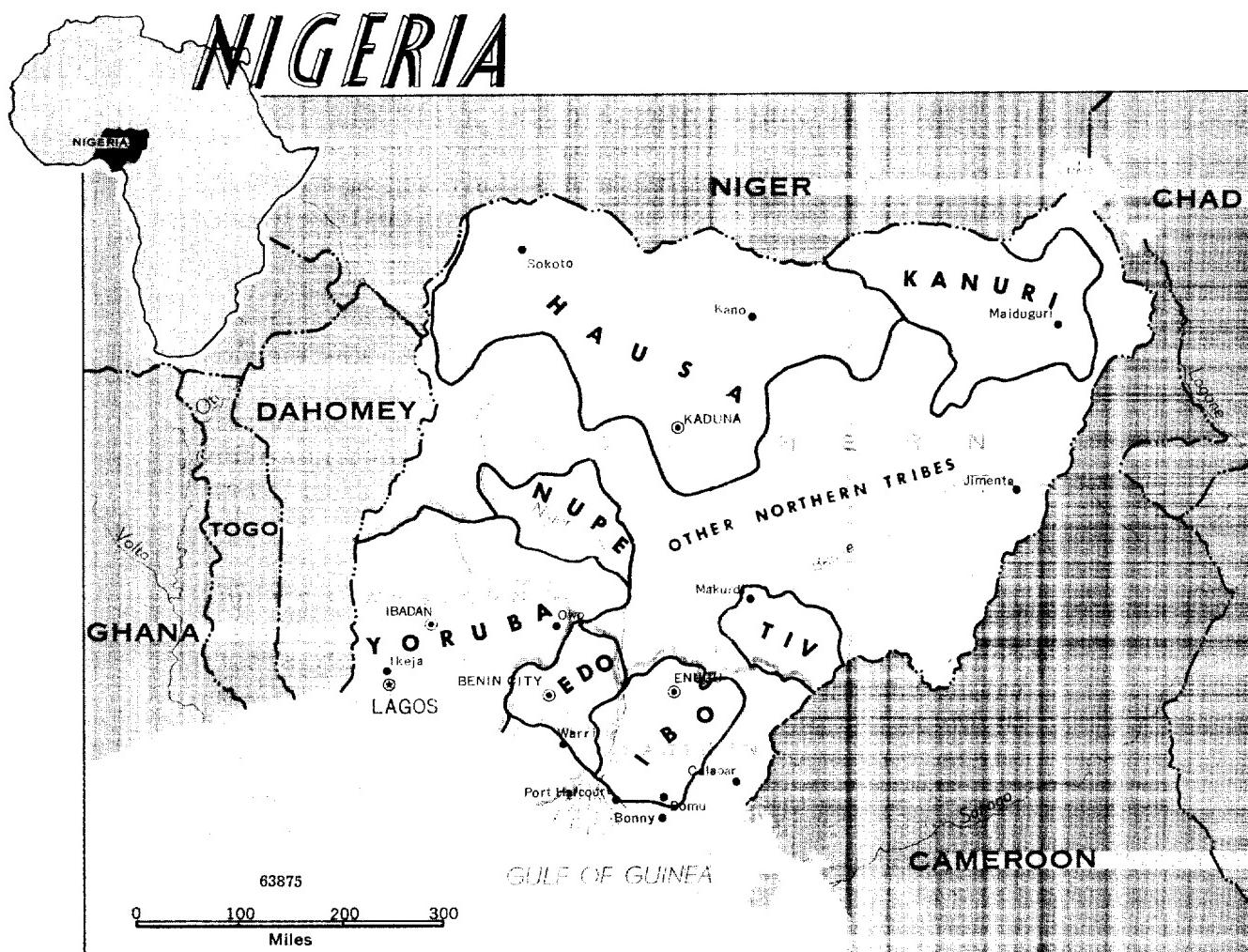
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* Because of the shortage of time for preparation of this item, the analytic interpretation presented here has been produced by the Central Intelligence Agency without the participation of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State or of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Department of Defense.

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*Nigeria: Supreme Commander Gowon has abruptly abandoned his neutral role in Nigeria's constitutional crisis and moved to impose a revolutionary new structure with a strong central government and seven additional states.

Late last week Gowon told the delegation from his native North to the current constitutional conference in Lagos that the army would not accept the loose federal arrangement toward which the civilian representatives of the present four regions appeared to be moving. Instead, he presented--virtually as an ultimatum--a plan calling for the division of the North into six states and the East into three. The West and Mid-West regions would remain as they are.

The central government, including a president and prime minister and a parliament in which each state will have equal representation, would have strong powers, while the states would have less autonomy than the regions have under the present federal constitution. An interim army-civilian government would be set up until constitutional and administrative arrangements are completed.

By intervening in the work of the constitutional conference, Gowon responded to pressure from army elements opposed to the diminution of army influence through the formation of regional armies. He probably was also influenced by representatives of northern and eastern minority groups who have been pressing for greater autonomy and the creation of smaller states.

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The Ibo tribesmen who predominate in the present Eastern region can be expected to resist the army plan and may go so far as to declare the East independent of the federation. Gowon indicated on 19 September that he anticipated an early secession attempt by the East and was prepared to use force to oppose such a move or any effort by the Ibos to pre-empt the rich oil-producing coastal areas of the region inhabited by the minority tribes. These minority elements in the East will be pleased by the new power afforded them through the creation of new states.

The plan will also probably be well received by the Yorubas of western Nigeria. Their leader, Chief Awolowo, has long advocated such a structure which he envisages as enabling him to gain top power in a new civilian regime.

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NOTE

India: Violence probably will break out in Calcutta during a leftist-inspired general strike scheduled for 22 and 23 September. The strike, directed against the failure of the government to solve the food problem, is the latest in a series of leftist efforts to embarrass the government prior to the 1967 elections. The West Bengal state government plans to use local Congress Party "resistance committees" to keep shops open and trains running. This tactic could backfire, however, and set off violence of the type that occurred during the Calcutta strikes earlier this year.

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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE

The United States Intelligence Board on 16 September 1966 approved the following national intelligence estimate:

Memorandum to Holders of SNIE 10-2-65,
"Soviet and Chinese Strategy and Tactics
in North Africa, the Middle East, and
South Asia"

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